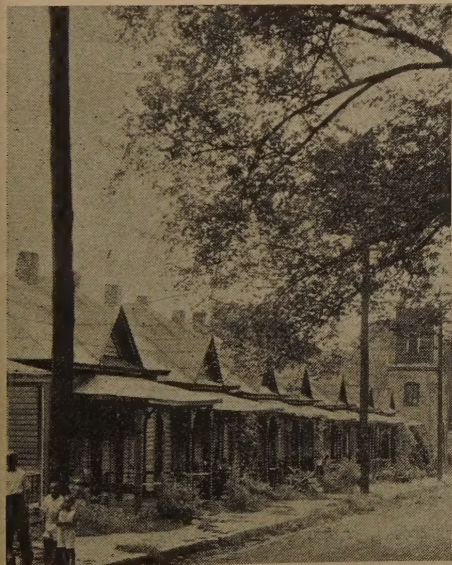
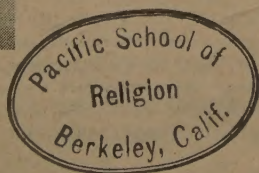


SOCIAL ACTION



Good Housing for America



Vol. 3 No. 5 • March 1, 1937


SOCIAL ACTION

National Organ of the Council for Social Action
289 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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SOCIAL ACTION, Volume III, Number 5, March 1, 1937. Published twice a month, except July and August, by THE PILGRIM PRESS, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Subscription \$1.00 per year. Ten cents each for single copies. Seven cents each for ten or more copies. Entered as second-class matter September 15, 1936, at the Post Office at New York, New York under the Act of March 3, 1879.



Good Housing for America*



Houses have the same relationship to homes that bodies have to souls. "Abundant life" includes physical as well as spiritual health. The medical services offered to native and foreign groups by our missionaries are evidence enough of our concern for this fact.

It is a matter of common experience that the home is affected by the nature of the house lived in. Obviously, it is more difficult to create the values of the Christian home in houses which are dark and crowded, where privacy is impossible, where sordid and ugly surroundings keep the soul starved of beauty and peace. Plaster and mortar are not without their religious significance.

Good houses in wholesome neighborhoods are not the whole of salvation, but their influence upon human personality is too immediate, too basic, too important to be ignored by the Christian who is in earnest about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

SIXTY-THREE million Americans enjoy housing which ranges from "good to excellent." These houses are built soundly and with an eye to beauty; modern conveniences abound; there is play space for children and sun and fresh air for all. We Americans can be justly proud of the fact that more than half of our people are well housed.

But sixty millions of our fellow countrymen live in houses which do not measure up to standards necessary for decent and comfortable living. Back in 1912 the National Conference of Charities and Correction declared: "Social welfare demands for every family a safe and sanitary home; healthful surround-

*Prepared by Alfred Schmalz in cooperation with research staff of the Council for Social Action.

ings; ample and pure running water inside the house; modern and sanitary toilet conveniences for its exclusive use, located inside the building; adequate sunlight and ventilation; reasonable fire protection; privacy; rooms of sufficient size and number to decently house the members of the family; freedom from dampness; prompt, adequate collection of all waste materials." Certainly we do not ask less for people in 1937.

A government survey of 1934 restates in figures the measure in which housing falls short of these demands. Approximately 2,600,000 dwellings in sixty-four cities were investigated. This "Real Property Inventory" reports:

16.8 per cent of the houses were crowded or worse

13.5 per cent of the houses lacked private indoor toilets

20.2 per cent of the houses had neither bathtubs or showers

8.1 per cent of the houses lacked modern lighting

5.0 per cent of the houses were without running water.

These figures are averages. In some sections, conditions were considerably worse than average.

However, there are more disturbing facts than these. "Approximately one-third" of all American families live in slum-housing described as "of a character to injure health, endanger safety and morals and interfere with the normal family life of their inhabitants." *From nine to ten million families are destined by society to live in houses and in neighborhoods which tend to destroy character and frustrate life.*

The Social Cost of Bad Housing

BAD HOUSING makes for bad health.

The highest general death rates, sickness rates, and infant mortality rates are found in slum areas.

It is easy to see why this is so. Lack of sunlight and fresh air lowers the general tone of the body and lessens resistance to disease. Tuberculosis is rife among people who live in dark,



Congregational Home Boards

Coal Miners' Homes, Evarts, Kentucky.

ill-ventilated rooms. Rheumatism flourishes in damp cellars. Typhoid fever spreads where there is an impure and inadequate water supply. Disease of all kinds breeds where there is no sewer system and no sanitary toilets. It is self-evident that sickness and death rates must be higher in the slums than elsewhere. Obviously, there are other contributing causes in high death and sickness rates—poor food, lack of medical care, other social deficiencies—but poor housing is basic.

Studies made by the federal Children's Bureau in eight cities show that the more crowded a dwelling is, the less chance a baby has to survive. Good housing calls for a ratio of one person to a room, counting all rooms: 5 persons, 5 rooms—living room, kitchen, bath, two bedrooms. The Bureau found that *where there is one person to a room, the death rate for infants*

is only 52 for each 1,000 births, but when the ratio is between one and two to a room the death rate rises to 94, and when the ratio is more than two to a room it rises to 135.7.

Death Rate in the Slums

In his surveys of Cleveland, Howard Whipple Green divided the city into fourteen economic areas on the basis of the rentals recorded in the 1930 census. In the lowest area, rents averaged below \$15 a month; in the highest, \$100 and over. He found that in the two highest-rent areas, the general death rate was only 7.2 per 1,000 but that in the two lowest-rent areas, it was more than twice as much—15 per 1,000. Similarly, the tuberculosis death rate per 100,000 population 25-44 years of age varied from 34 in the highest economic areas to 215 in the lowest economic areas.

That good housing makes for health has been demonstrated in positive and striking terms in Liverpool, England. As early as 1897 Liverpool adopted the policy of replacing slum dwellings by decent housing projects, keeping the same tenants in the clean new houses. In some projects such re-housed families constituted from 77 to 99 per cent of the total occupants. It was found that after a few years the general death rate, and the infant death rate in these same neighborhoods were sometimes cut by as much as 50 per cent. In the tuberculosis death rate the decrease was usually greater.

BAD HOUSING *makes for delinquency and crime.*

Results of studies in Chicago over a period of thirty years force this conclusion. These studies show that although the racial make-up of certain slum areas has changed repeatedly—first Irish and German, then Scandinavian and Slavic, later Italian, Negro and Mexican—the same consistently high rates for delinquency and crime have prevailed in those areas. *Bring*



Children's Aid Society

The Women's City Club of New York City found that 75 per cent of the children in slum families investigated played in the streets.

any racial group into a slum area, and anti-social conduct develops at a higher than average rate.

Bad housing, of course, cannot be divorced from bad neighborhoods. The two go together. One could hardly hope to cut down delinquency rates by rebuilding a house or two. But when whole neighborhoods are rebuilt, giving children as well as older people, opportunities for more wholesome living, the amount of crime is appreciably cut down. Delinquency and

crime cannot be blamed on "bad plaster and mortar" alone, for bad associates also contribute to character disintegration. But bad associates, who may seem to be the primary factor in delinquency, are themselves the product of overcrowding and congested housing. Where adequate housing and suitable recreational facilities—parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, libraries—are available, anti-social behavior diminishes.

Housing Conditions of Delinquents

This fact is further fortified by a survey undertaken by the state of New Jersey in 1936 of the relation between housing and delinquency. The New Jersey study analyzed the housing condition under which 2,020 individuals confined in state penal and correctional institutions were living immediately prior to their commitment.

The survey finds that "those members of society who become delinquent live under markedly less favorable conditions than does the general population. Greatly overcrowded homes are especially prevalent—homes in which little privacy is possible for any member of the family, in which the tension of everyday life must be exaggerated, and which tend to drive away from the home particularly the younger members of the family group, who need space and freedom for their normal activities."

If housing had nothing to do with delinquency, then one would expect that delinquents would come from homes much like the average for the population as a whole. Instead, the Newark survey discloses these facts: while 80 per cent of the total population was adequately housed, *only 40 per cent of delinquents' homes were adequate*. Again, while only 19 per cent of the total population lived in crowded houses, *as many as 40 per cent of the delinquents came from crowded dwellings*. Furthermore, while only a little more than 1 per cent of the total

population lived in congested quarters, *almost 20 per cent of the delinquents came from such dwellings.*

"No community," the New Jersey survey concludes, "need be surprised when children from these crowded homes appear in juvenile court." Bad housing does not automatically or inevitably produce delinquents, but it is one of the major factors in warping the lives of the young and in bringing them into conflict with society.

The Cost to the Taxpayer

THE disproportionate amount of sickness, delinquency and crime which characterizes the slums is, of course, an item of general expense which the average taxpayer has to take into account, even if he lives in the suburbs far away from the life of the slums.

"Slum areas," it has been said, "cost the taxpayers more than any other part of the city."

In 1934 an analysis of a slum area in Cleveland revealed the fact that while this deteriorated area in the center of the city contained but 2.5 per cent of the total population, it produced 21 per cent of the murders, 26 per cent of the prostitution, 10 per cent of the illegitimate births, and 12 per cent of the deaths from tuberculosis. Furthermore, it absorbed 4.47 per cent of all that the city spent for police protection, 7.3 per cent of total expenses for health work, 8.1 per cent of all relief and social service expenditures, and 14.44 per cent of the total cost of fire protection.

Slums Are Expensive

In 1932 the cost to Cleveland taxpayers for direct services to this area (services of the sort that can be apportioned to a lo-

cality) amounted to \$1,356,988, but the tax returns from this area, if fully paid, would have amounted to only \$225,035. This left a deficit of \$1,131,953, which had to be paid by taxpayers from other districts. In addition, \$615,459 was spent by unofficial welfare agencies, supported largely by persons living outside this area.

Stated in another way, the tax-rate income from this slum was \$10.12 per person, while the cost of operating the section was \$61.22 per person. Thus the excess cost—of services over tax payments—amounted to \$51.10 per person. A similar study in 1935 of a Boston slum area with a population of 69,000 showed that it was costing the city \$37.43 per person more than was being returned in taxes. Excess costs in cases such as these are carried, of course, by taxpayers outside of the slums.

Shall the taxpayers continue to pay money out of their pockets for police, for hospital service, for prisons—which touch only the surface of the problem—or shall they shift their emphasis to slum-clearance and better housing which, it has been demonstrated, will cut the costs of sickness, delinquency, and crime? Shall we continue to deal with the effects or shall we attack the causes? Common sense would dictate the abolition of slum housing as a primary concern of the taxpayer.

The Causes of Poor Housing

WHAT is the cause of bad housing? There is a simple answer: people cannot afford to live in good homes.

In the prosperous year 1929, one-third of all American families had incomes *under* \$1,200 a year, one-third received from \$1,200 to \$2,000, and one-third received over \$2,000. The families with incomes under \$1,200 could not afford to buy or rent good homes.



Resettlement Administration

Negro Sharecropper's House, West Memphis, Arkansas.

Budget experts believe that a family should spend no more than one-fifth of its income for rent. In this case one-third of all American families—10,000,000—could allow for rent only \$10 to \$20 a month. The Real Property Inventory showed that as many as one-half of city families actually paid less than \$20 a month for rent, one-third less than \$15, and one-sixth less than \$10.

We repeat: the chief reason for poor housing is the low income of many American families, which do not permit the payment of rents which would provide good housing.

This fact was emphasized by Professor Edwin S. Burdell of Massachusetts Institute of Technology at a housing conference recently held in Boston. He said:

"Architects readily enough admit that for the most part they have limited the market for their services to the top 8 per cent of the population or those families whose incomes are over \$5,000.

The jerry-builder and the contractor using ready-made plans has provided the upper-middle group, whose annual incomes range from \$2,500 to \$5,000, with houses.

"What has happened to the remaining 71 per cent of American families, or over nineteen million potential dwelling consumers? The middle-income, or white collar group, between \$2,000 and \$2,500, take up the supply of apartments, triple deckers, family rows that rent from \$33 to \$42 or \$50 per apartment per month. This group also may move up into the out-moded equivalents of the 'brownstone fronts' vacated by the upper-income groups as they moved out to the suburban areas or into centrally located apartment hotels.

"The low-income groups of industrial and service workers usually have to remain in the older sections of the city, occupying a variety of out-moded structures commonly known as tenements. In point of numbers we note that about sixteen million families, or nearly 60 per cent of all families, are limited by their economic resources to dwellings for which they pay a few dollars, but not more than \$8 per room per month. Who is interested in providing adequate housing for this group?"

Who Will Build Low-Rent Dwellings?

That is a crucial question. Who is interested from a business viewpoint in providing adequate housing for the low-income group? Can private enterprise provide adequate housing at the rentals these people can pay, and still make a profit? Says Edith Elmer Wood, an authority on the housing question, "No one will claim that, under average American construction costs, modern housing of size to accommodate a family can be built new even on low-cost land to rent at a profit at \$15 or even \$20 a month, or anywhere near it."

The only houses available for the low-income group are old and deteriorated dwellings. That is where this group is now forced by economic circumstances to live.

Methods of Improving Housing

SAYS Edith Elmer Wood, "private enterprise will continue in the future, as it has in the past, to build new houses for those who can buy them at a profitable price and to rent well-kept-up modern homes to those who can afford to pay profitable rentals. For the rest they will say 'There is no demand from these families for better housing than they have.' And from their point of view, they will be absolutely right. These families present no effective demand. They cannot, in general, pay appreciably higher rentals than they do pay."

A few years ago a number of "limited-dividend" housing companies were organized. The theory behind their organization was that if private enterprise voluntarily limited itself to a moderate return on investment, low-cost housing could then be provided. In New York such companies receive exemptions from state taxes and partial exemptions from local taxes in return for regulation, limitation of profit to six per cent, and statutory limitation of rents.

In the United States as a whole there have been only a handful of such companies, and the amount of help that they have given in the solution of the housing problem is, according to Edith Elmer Wood, "disappointingly small." They have been useful in demonstrating new ideas in lay-out or house design and in raising the housing standards of the middle economic third of our population. But they have not begun to provide housing for the bottom third, the group which most needs help. The average rent for the eleven projects completed in New York before 1933 (for 1,936 families) was \$10.76 per room per month. Such rent for a family of five is \$53.80 per month and is out of reach of the bottom third of our population.

If private enterprise cannot solve the problem of good housing for the low-income group, where can we look? What is the way out?

THERE are several possible solutions, and probably all of them must be experimented with.

First, there is the major problem of *modifying the distribution of our national income*. As has already been said, bad housing will be eliminated when people can afford to spend more for rents. We cannot deal with this problem here, but emphasize the fact that it underlies all permanent improvement in housing conditions.

Secondly, there is the possibility of *subsidizing families that cannot afford to pay even minimum rents*. To some extent this has been done during the depression. As an emergency method it has its place, but it does not actually improve housing conditions for people receiving such aid, since it merely pays their rents in the cheapest houses available.

Thirdly, there is the possibility of *government assistance in the building and operation of housing projects*. Some hopeful results are being achieved along these lines.

On June 16, 1933 the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works came into being. The purpose of this governmental agency was to provide for the "construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repair under public regulation or control of low-cost housing and slum-clearance projects." Its establishment marks the first serious grappling of the United States government with the problem of housing conditions.

The Government Housing Program

This housing program of the government had two objectives: one, to employ men; the other, to demonstrate the possibilities of slum-clearance and low-rent housing. To accomplish these

*Public Works Administration*

Government Housing Project, Atlanta, Georgia.

ends the Housing Division planned for the loaning to limited dividend corporations of 85 per cent of the estimated cost of the housing project, the other 15 per cent to be provided by the receiver of the loan. These loans bore 4 per cent interest and were to be amortized in thirty years. The government's loan was secured by a first mortgage on the property.

Only seven projects were undertaken under this arrangement. Private enterprise was not sufficiently interested, and in February, 1934, the plan was abandoned. Thereafter the Housing Division attacked the problem differently, and "concentrated on the initiation, financing, and construction of projects under its own responsibility."

FIFTY housing projects in thirty-five cities of the United States and its insular possessions are now either completed or under construction. Their total cost is approximately \$130,-

000,000. They are of many sizes and kinds, and are located in both small and large cities, on slum-cleared land and on previously undeveloped land. Some are in white sections, others in areas populated by Negroes. The amounts allotted vary from \$435,100 for Cherokee Terrace in Enid, Oklahoma, to \$12,783,000 for the Ten Eyck Houses in New York City. Areas planned vary from a few thousand square feet to as many as sixty acres. Some of the dwellings are one and two story group houses, others are immense apartment buildings with hundreds of units. Some have private gardens, while others have one common court with play spaces. All are planned for the lower-income groups.

The question early came up as to who would assume responsibility for the management of these projects. Two plans were possible: they might be leased to legally constituted local or state housing authorities, or they might be operated directly by the federal government. The Housing Division has expressed its desire to relinquish responsibility and control to local housing authorities as soon as these are qualified to act. However, the comparative lack of such bodies and the inexperience of the majority of existing bodies has necessitated in most cases direct operation by the government, for the time being.

Forward-looking as is the housing program of the federal government, it does not in itself hold promise of completely solving the housing problem. The Housing Division has made no claim that it would. It states that "these projects are not intended to solve the low-rent housing problem. Rather they consist in a practical demonstration to serve as a yardstick of experience in the activity that lies ahead. They offer to municipalities all over the country a measure of solvability."

It is in this light that we should consider the place of the

government's housing program. It is a hopeful beginning, and deserves such recognition. But the problem of providing adequate housing for all Americans is still before us.

The Wagner-Steagall Housing Bill

THE Wagner-Steagall Housing bill, introduced into both branches of the Congress, is a further step toward the solution of the housing problem on a national scale. It aims to provide "decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income" and to make provisions for "the reduction of unemployment and the stimulation of business activity."

To accomplish this, the bill creates a permanent United States Housing Authority, consisting of three members to be appointed by the President. This Housing Authority may, within four years, issue a billion dollars in bonds to provide for loans to public housing agencies. The law limits the loans during the first year to \$200,000,000, during each of the next two years to \$250,000,000, and during the fourth year to \$300,000,000. They must be repaid in less than sixty years.

The Housing Authority may also make loans to limited-dividend companies, up to 85 per cent of the cost of the project. No more than \$25,000,000 shall be loaned to such agencies in any one year.

In order to keep the cost of rents down, the Housing Authority may also make grants in the form of "fixed and uniform annual contributions." Not more than \$10,000,000 in new grants shall be made in any single year. The bill provides \$50,000,000 for this purpose.

The Housing Authority may also develop and administer demonstration projects of its own in slum-clearance and low-rent housing. However, not more than one such project shall

be undertaken in any locality, and not more than \$25,000,000 shall be spent for that purpose in any one year. It is provided that the Authority shall sell or lease these demonstration projects to a public housing agency or lease it to a consumers' housing society, as soon as practicable.

The direction, planning and management of housing developments under the bill rest in the local housing authorities. The provisions of the act are broad and elastic, and permit flexibility of operation according to the needs of various localities.

Between 250,000 and 300,000 dwelling units will be completed in four years, if the bill is enacted by the Congress. It is expected that rents will be kept under \$6.00 per room per month. For a family of five, adequately housed, the monthly rental would thus amount to \$30.

Criticism of the Bill

THE bill has critics from both the conservative and the radical groups—from those who deplore government interference in a field they believe should be reserved for private enterprise and from those who do not believe that even this measure of government assistance is sufficient to solve the problem.

In reply to the contention that the government will be competing with private business, Senator Wagner says that it has already been demonstrated that private enterprise cannot provide adequate housing for the low-income group. There is thus no competition on the level of "adequate" housing. It is true, of course, that if the government builds extensively enough, the persons who now live in slum buildings owned by private landlords will move into good housing owned by the government. In this sense there will be competition. But it can be asked whether the poor must forever suffer from bad



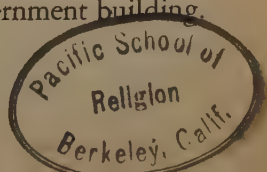
Public Works Administration

***Government Housing Project, Montgomery, Alabama.
Rents begin at \$2 a week.***

housing because private enterprise is to be protected in its right to a profit, regardless of the human cost of slum conditions.

Critics from the other side insist that the bill does not go far enough. It is impossible, they say, to provide adequate housing for slum dwellers by any plan that does not involve complete governmental subsidy, since persons living in our worst slums are too poor to pay even the low rents provided for under this bill.

Further, it is urged that there must be governmental control over speculation in land and profiteering on construction materials in order to keep down the costs of government building. The bill does not provide for such control.



A Proper Business of the Church

HOUSING is an old problem, but it has in our day become acute. The government, and the people generally, are seeing the need for a frontal attack upon bad housing—source of such peril to health, morals, democracy, religion. This is the encouraging thing. By the end of 1936, twenty-five states had passed laws providing for the establishment of housing authorities. These housing authorities are given extremely broad powers. They have power of eminent domain, and can therefore take over property. They are permitted to accept federal aid for housing.

The creation of housing authorities in the other twenty-three states is the next step in the direction of a solution of our problem. The growing interest of the public suggests that this will soon be demanded by the people of those states.

As in all else, an informed public is the fundamental requirement for a solution of the housing problem. Good housing, we have seen, concerns us all. If we live in the slums, we are exposed to character disintegration and spiritual frustration. Even if we live in the suburbs, in the small town, in the open country, we are not free of the problems rooted in bad housing. Disease stops at no street, and delinquency and crime reach over into good housing areas for their victims. Our communities are a unity. What happens to any of our fellows profoundly affects our own life. Furthermore, for the religious mind, the evils that men suffer must be borne by us too. More than self-protection is involved. Demands are made upon our love and our sense of justice.

Good housing will not easily be provided. Let us not delude ourselves. It is a goal achieved only through struggle. That struggle must begin in our own minds, in our own honest searching for an answer to the problem. And it must issue in our cooperation with all who are working for a nation whose people are adequately housed.

How to Use This Housing Number

A Group Discussion

Set aside one meeting of your organization to deal with the problem of housing. Let several persons report briefly on various aspects of the problem, for instance: (1) The Present Housing Situation, pages 3-9; (2) The Cost of Bad Housing to the Community and the Taxpayer, pages 9-10; (3) The Cause of Poor Housing, pages 10-12; (4) The Development of a Public Housing Program, pages 13-20.

A Housing Exhibit

Arrange an exhibit of pictures and posters, showing actual housing conditions and new projects, both private and public. Local housing authorities will gladly help you. For information about whom to write, communicate with the C.S.A.

A Trip to the Slums

Arrange with your group to visit a slum district, to see for yourselves what the housing conditions are. The trip will be most valuable if you secure the help of a social worker to guide you around. Call upon your Family Welfare Society, Council of Social Agencies, District Nurses Association, or Settlement House for this service.

A Community Conference

Organize a conference for the whole community, to which you can bring housing experts. This was done on March 5 in Boston when Elizabeth G. Whiting, community service representative of the C.S.A., conducted a meeting under the auspices of the Department of Woman's Work of the Massachusetts Conference. Speakers included the general secretary of the Boston Y.W.C.A., the chairman of the State Planning Board, the Building Commissioner of the City of Boston. At luncheon an address was given by Professor Edwin S. Burdell of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, part of whose remarks we have quoted in this issue of our magazine. Mrs. Whiting makes particular mention of the eagerness of secular agencies in the community to co-operate with church groups in working on this problem.

Can You Answer These Questions?

1. What are the minimum standards for good housing? Page 3.
2. What special interest has the church in the provision of good housing for all people? Page 4.
3. What are the social costs of slums? Page 4-9.
4. Why cannot private enterprise provide low-cost housing? Page 11.
5. What does the Wagner-Steagall Housing bill hope to accomplish? How? Page 17.

Study Peace This Summer

Nine Institutes of International Relations will again be conducted this summer under the auspices of the American Friends Service Committee and the Council for Social Action.

Last year 171 members of our Congregational-Christian churches attended these institutes, and formed the third largest denominational group. This year we hope that the number will be even greater.

We list the places at which institutes will be held, together with information about dates and costs:

<i>Place</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Cost</i> (Board, lodging, tuition)
Kansas, Newton	June 8-18	\$25
North Carolina, Durham	June 14-25	15
Iowa, Grinnell	June 16-25	25
Pennsylvania, Cheney	June 19-July 4	25
Illinois, Naperville	June 21-July 2	30
California, Oakland	June 22-July 2	27.50
California, Whittier	June 29-July 9	25
Massachusetts, Wellesley	June 29-July 9	35
Oregon, Portland	July 5-15	28.50

Cost of tuition alone—of interest to persons living near one of these college campuses, and who might be able to commute—is only \$10.

People Who Are Expected

These institutes are specially planned for ministers, teachers, church school and young people's leaders, older young people, and others in similar positions of responsibility for a peace program.

We urge our churches to send representatives, by raising money for scholarships. One concrete way to work for peace is to make it possible for some person to prepare for peace leadership.

For further information please direct communications to Alfred Schmalz, at the New York office of the C.S.A.

By The Way

Marquette H. Bro

Three Women

"Maybe we caint save the world with all our trying, but we sure caint save it without." Thus spoke a Negro minister who glorified his profession by fifty years of service. The two following incidents point the two basic attitudes of those who "jes' don't even try" and those who "keep trying." They are offered here for their philosophical value.

We "Take Our Ease"

She was an exceedingly good-natured Negro and the bulk of her almost filled the doorway of her ramshackle little house on the outskirts of Indiana Harbor. Half a dozen children, assorted sizes, shot past her onto the rickety porch—to see who the visitor could be and what she could want.

She assured the visitor that she was not interested in churches, "No, thank you, ma'am. Us aint even got money fo' a lodge and a lodge is a heap mo' useful'n a church." Then she went on, offering comments on current affairs. . . .

"My man, he'd be all fo' joinin' this-shere union they's gettin' up.

He feels like as how this-shere union could get mo' money comin' in and get lessen hours than they's working these terr'ble hot days and maybe in the end it could git us a bath tub.

"But I say to him, 'Eb,' I say, 'no union won't do nothin' in our day. Maybe our chillun or our chillun's chillun, they'll learn demse'fs how to stick together an' work demse'f up till they's livin' like human bein's. But that won't never happen in our day. An' why should be work ourse'fs to skin and bones fo' our chilluns? I say we done enough fo' dem when we bawn dem. We aint agoin' to save the world an' we might as well take our ease'."

We "Keep Going"

Mrs. P—— is also a Negro, with meager education but shrewd native intelligence. She can read without whispering the words aloud, which is a better education than most of her neighbors. She has a family, and takes in washing.

Mrs. P—— always has what she calls "a hobby for God." One year it was "Bible texts that stir

you up." She passed them freely among her friends, after prayerful consideration and perfectly fearless accuracy as to her friends' shortcomings. Fortunately, they accepted these texts as the voice of God.

This year her "hobby for God" is Child Labor. She calls on her neighbors—pen, ink, and paper in hand. She explains the situation, sparing no details. She then dictates or writes, for her neighbor, letters to the proper representatives, the bishop, and the president of the United States, making plain the necessity for pushing the Amendment.

She keeps track of her Child Labor calls by means of milk-bottle-caps which she drops in a cigar box, one for each visit. "When I'm tired and feel like I can't make any more calls, then I count over my bottle-caps, and God says 'Keep a-going, Mary. I'm depending on you for a whole box of caps.' When this Amendment gets fixed onto the Constitution, nobody will feel better than I will."

"... and Going"

Mrs. Sadie G—— is one of the best informed church women in her city. Not technically informed on a specific subject; not a business woman with specialized train-

ing. 'Just a housewife,' a very talkative, good-natured, red-haired housewife. No matter what the subject—child labor, immigration legislation, compulsory military training, the state of the church in Germany, the schools in Russia, the land in Spain — Mrs. G—— has the statistics and the latest and most authoritative opinions.

In her church society, her discussion group, her club, the Y.W.C.A., the P.T.A., they say, "Ask Sadie." They tell you, "Her husband has spells, and Sadie can't take any job that ties her down, but she knows more than all the rest of us. Even the minister calls her when he has to know something in a hurry."

Sadie herself says, "When I discovered I'd have to resign as president of the Woman's Society and couldn't hold any responsibility in the church, I decided I'd have to find something which counted anyway. So I decided I'd keep well-informed and help form public opinion. I mean I'd keep so well informed that people could count on what I tell them about God's world and the hard time He has trying to run it without their help. I took it on as a trust, you might say, and He has certainly given me wisdom to figure out things I could never have understood in my own strength."



Legislative Action

Anti-Lynching Campaign

A new effort is being made to end the barbarous practice of lynching in America. The Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill (S. 1709) has been introduced in the Senate and several similar bills have been proposed in the House.

Provisions of the Bill

(a) The bill provides for federal action against state officers who are proved derelict in their duty to protect the victims of lynching mobs. Such officers are guilty of a felony and subject to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment not exceeding five years, or both.

(b) The act provides that the locality involved in such a breakdown of law and order is subject to suit in a federal court and liable for a fine of from \$2,000 to \$10,000. This money is to be used to compensate the victim of an attempted lynching or his next of kin, if the lynching has actually taken place.

(c) The new act provides for

a federal investigation of lynchings to determine whether or not the local officers were negligent. Counties whose officers did their duty will not be fined, nor will a peace officer be punished if he did all in his power to protect the victim.

(d) The bill broadens the "Lindbergh Law" to cover the kidnapping of persons for the purpose of lynching them.

Laxity of Local Officers

The Wagner-Van Nuys bill is thus an indirect approach to the problem. There is a great deal of evidence that laxity on the part of state and local authorities has been a stimulus to lynching, since lynching mobs had nothing to fear from the law. Therefore, by establishing federal penalties for official negligence, the Wagner-Van Nuys bill aims to strengthen the protection accorded by law to persons accused of crime. If public authorities know they must protect their prisoners against lynch-

ing mobs, or else suffer a penalty, they are more likely to give that protection.

The constitutionality of the bill is based on the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, which gives Congress the power to enforce the rights to life, liberty, and due process of law when these rights are infringed by a state. The Supreme Court has ruled that the word "state" in this amendment means not only the legislature but also the officers of the state or of its sub-divisions. This interpretation is the constitutional basis for federal action in regard to negligent officers and public authorities.

The new bill is the second attempt to curb lynching by national action. The first attempt, the Costigan-Wagner bill, was defeated in the last Congress by a filibuster of southern senators. The new bill is designed to meet some of the objections to its predecessor.

New Features

In the first place, lynching is defined as death or maiming by mob violence of a person arrested for or suspected of any crime. This definition is inserted to prevent misuse of the act in cases of ordinary violence, or where mob violence results only in minor injuries. Gang killings are excepted from the definition in order to protect the authorities where gangster warfare is rife.

Violence in labor disputes is also excepted to prevent the misuse of the act against labor.

Secondly, there is no reference in the new bill to the trial of individual members of a lynch mob or to conspiracy on the part of officials of the local community. These provisions were omitted to strengthen the constitutionality of the act and to meet the charge that states' rights were being invaded.

Individual members of a lynch mob may, however, be arrested by federal authorities if they are guilty of transporting a person over state lines for the purpose of lynching him. This is provided for in a proposed amendment to the "Lindbergh Law," after the Department of Justice had said that the present "Lindbergh Law" did not apply to the interstate lynching of Claude Neal, who was taken from an Alabama jail and lynched in Florida.

A third important difference is the new provision for a federal investigation of lynchings to see if the officers have been negligent. The absence of this provision was a weakness in the Costigan-Wagner bill, for negligent officials are unlikely to investigate thoroughly their own negligence.

We Need this Law

The need for the bill is patent. Since the War, twenty-five Americans have been burned alive by lynching mobs. Over 5,000 of

our people have been lynched in the United States in the past fifty-five years. Although the majority of victims have been Negro men, the tragic lists of lynched persons include both blacks and whites, both men and women.

The common idea that sex crime is the source of lynching does not fit the facts, for, as the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America has stated, "less than one-sixth of the victims have been accused by the lynchers themselves of any sort of sex crime."

The full extent of the subversion and evasion of law is clear, when we realize that in 99.2 per cent of the lynchings, no lyncher was convicted.

Act Now

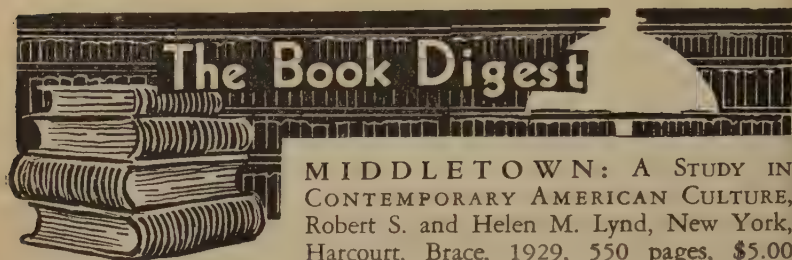
A large majority of people in all sections of the country favor federal action to combat lynching. The American Institute of Public Opinion in one of its national polls found that 70 per cent of the nation favor a federal law. The sentiment is strong in the South as well as in the North: 65 per cent of Southerners appear to favor such a law. The *Richmond (Virginia) Times-Dispatch* said in February that it saw "no hope of wiping out lynching, the greatest crime against Southern civiliza-

tion, except through Federal action." *The Miami (Florida) Daily News* argued: "Lynching submits one human being to hideous tortures. It submits a dozen or a hundred or a thousand to moral degradation and loss of self-respect. In recent years it has been a matter for gloating in the European press. America should tolerate no further compromise with barbarism. The states have hung back. Now it is up to the federal government to drive the matter through."

The churches have a great responsibility to help this national drive against lynching. The Council for Social Action recognizes this, and urges you to act to stop lynching now.

Three Lines of Action

1. *Distribute STOP LYNCHING*, a Federal Council leaflet of essential facts, which may be secured from the Council for Social Action. Single copies, 1c.; 75c. a hundred.
2. *Write the President* asking him to send a special message to Congress in support of the new anti-lynching bill.
3. *Write your Senators and Congressman* to support the Wagner-Van Nuys Anti-Lynching Bill, (S.1709).



MIDDLETOWN: A STUDY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE, Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1929, 550 pages, \$5.00

MUNCIE, Indiana — The long anonymous "Middletown" — is a community which can give us a clue to the meaning of America. It is a typical midwestern city, and as such was selected by the Lynds for their careful social survey. It is their purpose to give a complete picture of a single community.

Later this spring the second installment of this survey will be published under the title *Middletown in Transition, A Study in Cultural Conflicts*, which will continue the story from 1929 down through the depression years to the present. We offer this digest of the earlier, but not outdated, book, because it gives facts which will help us understand our total community life.

Life in "Middletown"

What are people in "Middletown" doing, what goals do they set before themselves, what are they thinking about? These are the questions for which the investigators sought answers. The results of their study fall into six

sections which they call the "main-trunk activities" of social life.

Let us see what they are.

1. *Getting a Living.*

In "Middletown" 43 out of every 100 persons are engaged in getting a living, either as workers or in some business activity.

The business community is confident about the future, even though the present, in many aspects, is confusing. It finds sales rising through intensive advertising effort and the promotion of installment buying, but discovers that the chain store is crowding out the small trader. It sees buying power on the increase, yet the majority of people are still earning less than the minimum cost of good living.

The picture is not clear. But the period of the boom is on; the 1920's are in full swing.

The Worker's Future

Workers are confused, too. And, contrary to the optimism of the business man, they are not confident about the future. They still believe in their freedom to

climb the ladder of success to a brighter economic level, but among this 71 per cent of "Mid-dletown" inhabitants there is a growing pessimism about the possibility of doing it. Child labor is diminishing. So is the labor of older men, for whom there are fewer and fewer jobs. Wages will buy more things, but lay-offs and shut-downs are found to be reducing annual wages and increasing insecurity. Health conditions in the factories are improving; but one added problem is the new nerve strain which the speed-up in production is developing. Union organization is at a low ebb.

The workers, more than the business community, are feeling the first symptoms of coming depression.

2. *Making a Home*

The home-makers number 23 out of every 100 persons. These women spend far less time in the home than did their mothers. Prepared food, ready-made clothes, commercial laundries—all reduce the time required for housekeeping. Then, too, the family is smaller, despite the continued taboo on birth control.

There is greater freedom for women, but what this has come to mean is largely freedom to work. Married women are increasingly forced to enlarge the family income by getting jobs in office or factory.

Houses They Live In

What of the houses? Housing has improved in part: most dwellings have 50 per cent more window space than those built in 1890; they almost all have electricity. But 33 per cent of the houses still have no sewer connections, and 25 per cent are without running water. Rents are high, costing about 25 per cent of income. Poor workers are "doubling up." Forty families live in shacks called "Shedtown."

3. *Training the Young*

For the children, the school rather than the home has increasingly become the center of social life. Far more go to school than was the case in 1890, they stay for a longer period, and they study more practical subjects than did their parents. School life has also changed in the matter of extra-curricular activities—sports and social clubs of all kinds.

4. *The Use of Leisure*

The leisure habits of "Middle-town" have been revolutionized by three inventions: the automobile, the moving pictures, and the radio.

The automobile has turned the community out on the road, for its Sunday entertainment and its summer vacation. The moving pictures have given constricted lives a chance to escape from boredom and to find pleasure in the romances and adventures of other

people. They have fostered juvenile sophistication—and delinquency; and have helped to disrupt home life. The radio, on the contrary, is influential in making the family a unit again.

5. *Religious Practices*

People, while clinging to their beliefs, are showing less interest in Church activities, as evidenced by smaller attendance and smaller contributions.

6. *Community Activities*

"Middletown" clings to its two-party system with united wrath against any new movement like the LaFollette presidential campaign (1924). But political interest in general has waned, perhaps because of the corruption of machine politics.

Newspapers are read avidly, but for the news of sport rather than of politics. Editors are more interested in not offending their advertisers than they are in political principles.

Public services like that of food inspection have improved. But there is little organized health work, and large numbers of the working class need medical care which is not obtainable.

Two factors of a divisive nature pull the community apart: class conflict and race prejudice. Its unity is based largely on an interest in sports and in civic loyalty.

Middletown gives us the picture of an America in which there is much still to be done. Inside its homes are people much like the rest of us, happy but often bewildered, at work but feeling insecure, wondering about many things. That was America just before 1929. Since then we have passed through a period of severe strain. We shall prepare later a book digest of the sequel to *Middletown* to see what changes these ten years have produced.

THIS SUPREME COURT QUESTION

Your ability to discuss the proposals for constitutional and court reform will be strengthened by knowledge of Dr. Charles A. Beard's pamphlet on "The Constitution and Social Issues," published by the Council for Social Action, Dec. 10, 1935. Price: 10c. for single copies; ten or more 7c.

HELP US GET SUBSCRIBERS

Do you know of just one person who, if you asked him on the right day, would subscribe to SOCIAL ACTION? Won't you see him soon, and urge him to become a reader of our magazine? Such friendly effort by our subscribers would help us immensely.

Readings on Housing

BOOKS:

Modern Housing, by Catherine Bauer. Houghton, 1934, 331 pages, \$5.00. Not until political pressure from interested and affected groups is exerted will the government grant all the needed subsidy for low-cost housing.

Housing America, by the Editors of *Fortune*. Harcourt, 1932, 159 pages, \$2.00. An analysis of the contemporary methods of providing shelter in this country.

Farm and Village Housing, edited by J. M. Gries and James Ford. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, Washington, D. C., 293 pages, \$1.15. Nowhere else are rural housing conditions and problems systematically and thoroughly treated.

Negro Housing, by Charles S. Johnson. President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, Washington, D. C., 282 pages, \$1.15.

Recent Trends in American Housing, by Edith Elmer Wood. Macmillan, 1931, 317 pages, \$3.00.

Delinquency Areas, by C. R. Shaw and others. University of Chicago, 1930, 240 pages, \$4.00.

Current Developments in Housing, edited by D. T. Rowlands and Coleman Woodbury. *Annals of American Academy*, March, 1937, 233 pages, \$2.00.

PAMPHLETS:

The Relation Between Housing and Health, by Rollo H. Britton. U. S. Public Health Report, Reprint No. 65, 1936.

Housing Under Capitalism, by Sidney Hill. International Publishers, 1935, 38 pages, 10c.

Housing . . . Or Else, by Langdon W. Post. New York City Housing Authority (10 East 40th Street, New York), 1936, 22 pages, free.

How the Other Half Is Housed, by Rupert B. Vance. University of North Carolina, 1936, 18 pages 15c. A pictorial record of sub-minimum farm housing in the South.

Slums and Blighted Areas in the United States, by Edith E. Wood. F.E.R.A., Housing Division, Washington, D. C., 1936, 126 pages, 15c.

Urban Housing, by F.E.R.A., Washington, D. C., 1936, 104 pages, free. The story of the P.W.A. Housing Division, 1933-36.

